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EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Written statement* submitted by North South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 December 2000]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.01-10408 (E)

Effective functioning of human rights mechanisms

Interference in the electoral process

1. A number of violations of the fundamental principle of sovereignty and non-interference, which are core provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, have taken place after being initiated by the Great Powers against small States using various concepts dating back to the last century and since updated, such as "intervention for humanitarian reasons", which is not far removed from the humanitarian intervention advocated by the Holy See during the nineteenth century on behalf of Christians throughout the world.

2. Although this "humanitarianism", which shows little respect for international legality, is receding to some extent (yielding ground to the concept of assistance to persons in danger), a new form of interference is beginning to be practised, namely, "intervention in the electoral process". Control is being exercised by certain Great Powers over elections in certain small countries of the north and in many countries of the south. They exert pressure in favour of candidates of their choice and even go so far as announcing electoral results before they are proclaimed in the country in question. Western-type democracy thus becomes an import and export product and is accompanied by affirmation of the principle of the absolute pre-eminence of universal suffrage, regardless of the social or economic context of the country concerned, as well as by strict control over the balloting and its results.

3. This interference in the electoral process is practised in the absence of any legal justification and quite illegally. On the contrary, the electoral processes of certain Great Powers reveal the existence of manipulation, irregularities and confusion, which lead to questionable results and reflect the crisis being experienced by "representative" democracy.

4. Only the United Nations, in cooperation with regional organizations, by providing assistance for the organization of free elections without discrimination, on a completely impartial footing and on the basis of an agreement with the State concerned, can be regarded as entitled to intervene in the electoral processes of countries needing assistance in this respect.

On the basis of the efforts already made in various areas by United Nations bodies, and particularly by the United Nations Volunteers, the Commission on Human Rights, after having condemned interference in the electoral process, is justified in establishing a working group to examine the conditions that must be satisfied before elections can be organized in a manner constituting an effective component of authentic democracy.